

File: Bull trout

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
JARBIDGE RESOURCE AREA  
2620 KIMBERLY ROAD  
TWIN FALLS, IDAHO 83301

In Reply Refer To:  
6840

February 25, 1994

Memorandum

To: Bull Trout Task Force Participant  
From: Jarbidge Wildlife Biologist  
Subject: Bull Trout Task Force Meeting.

The following is a brief synopsis of the bull trout task force meeting held in Jackpot, Nevada (February 2, 1994). Generally, the meeting went as outlined. This synopsis is not intended to reflect all of the topics or comments made during the meeting.

Chuck Warren (Idaho Department of Fish & Game) gave a brief overview of historic and present distribution of bull trout in southern Idaho. Generally, there are reports of bull trout being present in the main stem of the Snake River, up Salmon Falls Creek, and in the Jarbidge River. They think there may have been bull trout in the Bruneau and Owyhee River systems but there isn't any documentation to support that. IDF&G thought that the biggest limiting factor for bull trout in these river systems is water temperature and secondarily water quality. Information regarding bull trout habitat requirements suggest that, they need water colder than 65°F. Information on bull trout in the Jarbidge River is very limited as far as seasonal use by bull trout and factors other than temperature that may be limiting bull trout distribution. Bull trout have been caught below the junction of the east and west forks of the Jarbidge River. Chuck commented that bull trout may use the main Jarbidge River in the winter through spring when water temperatures are cooler.

Idaho has recently finished a bull trout management plan for the state. They also have made it illegal to catch and keep bull trout in Idaho, with an exception somewhere in northern Idaho. Currently, the IDF&G manage the Jarbidge River as a native fishery and have quit stocking it to reduce impacts on red-band trout and bull trout. IDF&G is interested in doing some more work in the Jarbidge/Bruneau Rivers. However, they will not be able to do any work this summer due to prior work commitments.

Gary Johnson (Nevada Division of Wildlife) reported on the status of bull trout in Nevada. Bull trout were first documented in Dave Creek and subsequently in the East Fork of the Jarbidge. During the active mining near the West Fork of the Jarbidge, NDOW believes that from the mine area down to the junction with the East Fork was too polluted to maintain any bull trout in this reach. Bull trout have been documented in Jack Creek, Pine Creek, Slide Creek. Information from fish creel surveys indicate that bull trout comprise about 7 to 10% of the fish in the above drainages. All of the areas surveyed to date are on the Humbolt National Forest (Jarbidge Ranger District). They had a report of bull trout being present in Deer Creek this past year (upper reaches of the East Fork of the Bruneau River or Clover Creek). Based on the work the NDCW has completed so far they estimate that there are approximately 1,000 bull trout in the East Fork of the Jarbidge River with another 500 in the West Fork of the Jarbidge. The Nevada record for bull trout is 22 inches weighing 3-4 pounds. They have no documentation of bull trout ever being in the Salmon Falls Creek or Bruneau and Owyhee Rivers.

To date NDOW does not have any plans on changing the fishing limits in the drainages or having a specific possession limit for bull trout. Currently, the regulations read 10 trout. Nevada recently finished a bull trout management plan. Pending the outcome of the bull trout status review, Nevada may impose a no possession rule for bull trout. NDOW is interested in completing the inventory work on the tributaries on BLM lands where bull trout were found in the upper reaches. They probably would be able to do some of the work under a challenge cost share project in FY95 or beyond.

Jim Esch (U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, Idaho Field Office). Provided a brief overview of the petition to list the bull trout and current status of bull trout. Groups in Montana and Oregon initially petitioned that the species be listed. A number of other groups began gathering information for petitions in eastern Oregon and Idaho. Generally, populations in California are believed to be extinct. Populations in Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington are down. The status review will most likely be completed by April (it was to have been completed by last October). The biggest problem with doing the status review has been the lack of good data on bull trout. Most of the information is incidental in nature and they are still getting some reports. The status review has been completed for Idaho. Jim covered the possible conclusions of the status review (warranted - should be listed, warranted but precluded - not as high of a priority as other species, and unwarranted - information indicates that there is not a problem severe enough or not enough information for listing). The FWS is working with IDF&G, the Forest Service, and BLM in Idaho to come up with a conservation agreement. The conservation agreement may not preclude the listing of bull trout in Idaho. The PACFISH standards may be adopted for bull trout as part of the conservation agreement. Jim concluded that the bull trout does not currently have any protection under the Endangered Species Act.

After the background material was presented, it was opened up for general discussion.

Phil Joyal (Jarbridge Nevada) commented that in all of the years he had lived in the area bull trout had been around. However, one drainage caused him some concern because he noted that it was probably being over fished on bull trout. He stated that for years better than 50% of the fish caught in the drainage had been bull trout. Last year only 10% or less were bull trout. He also commented that a culvert on Jack Creek appeared to be a fish barrier. It seemed to him that the last time the culvert had been replaced the lower end was at least 5 feet above the water.

Margaret Thompson (Murphy Hot Springs) commented that after IDF&G quit stocking trout fishing had went down hill. Road plowing along the river just pushed rocks and other material directly into the river. She also had concerns about otters eating all of the fish.

Dianne Prunty (Murphy Hot Spring) commented that about 6 gallons of bleach went into the hot spring pool several times a month. She wondered if that, laundry being done in the hot spring or the numerous septic tanks had any impact on bull trout. One last concern was regarding the impacts of beaver dams on fish movements and water warming.

Mike McNeill (Humbolt National Forest) commented that with wilderness considerations and management might restrict some actions (controlling beaver, using some chemicals, etc.). He also commented that generally, the water monitoring data that the USFS had showed that there wasn't many problem areas (cold water temperatures, abundant macroinvertebrates, good cover along stream banks. He also stated that the USFS would work with Elko County regarding the culvert situation on Jack Creek. Dale Armstrong (the Elko County representative) agreed that they would look at the particular culvert.

Other discussion followed. Jim Esch mentioned that the Fish & Wildlife Service had some money that could be used for restoring riparian/wetland habitat on private land. The most discussion regarded the lack of information on bull trout habitat use in the Jarbridge River system. Is there only small resident populations in the headwaters? Is there a low level migration population that uses the Jarbridge River in the late fall through June? Are some drainages more important to the migratory population (if present) than others for reproduction? How many more miles of inventory is needed to determine current distribution. Some of the private land owners and individuals from the 71 Association wanted to know what impact the listing of bull trout would have on grazing or other land uses? What could the individuals do on their private land to enhance bull trout habitat?

The group thought another meeting would be appropriate for later in the summer (July). Most wanted to meet out in the area. Jim Esch commented that he would have more information regarding the conservation agreement and an update on the status review.

You will be receiving a letter sometime in May requesting that a suitable time period in mid-July for the next meeting.



CC:

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